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Message Text

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PAGE 01 MASERU 00559 011747Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 /077 W
----------076943 011842Z /43
R 011535Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8334
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
USMISSION UN NEW YORK

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, SF, LT (TRANSKEI)
SUBJECT: TRANSKEI BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: MASERU 0515,

1. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES IN MASERU WERE CALLED TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO RECEIVE COPIES OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LETTER (REFTEL) TO SECRETARY GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM CONCERNING THE NEW SITUATION ON THE SOUTHEASTERN BORDER WITH TRANSKEI. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KOTSOKOANE HAD A MEMBER OF THE STAFF READ THE LETTER IN ITS ENTIRETY AND THEN REVIEWED THE SITUATION IN HIS OWN WORDS.

2. TRADITIONALLY THE PEOPLE OF LESOTHO HAVE HAD FREE ACCESS TO SOUTH AFRICA. NEITHER VISAS NOR INTERNATIONAL PASSPORTS HAVE BEEN REQUIRED. (THIS HAS BEEN THE GENERAL RULE THROUGHOUT SOUTH AFRICA
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PAGE 02 MASERU 00559 011747Z

AND THE BLS). SINCE EARLY LAST YEAR, HOWEVER, A NEW ENTITY - THE TRANSKEI - HAD DEMANDED THAT BASOTHO OBTAIN VISAS (FIFTY CENTS FEE) AT THE BORDER BEFORE ENTERING. IT SUFFICED TO PRESENT A LOCAL PASS-BOOK OR IDENTITY DOCUMENT. THIS SIMPLE BUT NEW PROCEDURE ENDED FEBRUARY 17 WITH THE REQUIREMENT THAT BASOTHO DESIRING TO ENTER TRANSKEI APPLY FOR A VISA (RAND 2.50 OR ABOUT $3.00) FOR WHICH THE APPLICATION WOULD BE SENT TO THE CAPITAL, UMTATA, FOR CONSIDER-

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

ATION. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER THE VISA WOULD BE FOR SINGLE OR MULTIPLE ENTRIES NOR FOR HOW LONG IT WOULD BE VALID. TO COMPLICATE MATTERS STILL FURTHER, BASOTHO WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PRESENT INTERNATIONAL PASSPORTS INSTEAD OF LOCAL PASSBOOKS. (COMMENT: THIS EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATES NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL BASOTHO WHO DO NOT HOLD INTERNATIONAL PASSPORTS. FURTHER, THE GOL DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO ISSUE THOUSANDS OF PASSPORTS ON A CRASH BASIS. END COMMENT). MINISTER KOTSOKOANE SAID THE GOL STRONGLY SUSPECTS THE NEXT REQUIREMENT WILL BE FOR INTERNATIONAL PASSPORTS SPECIFICALLY VALIDATED FOR TRAVEL IN TRANSKEI. HE ALSO ALLEGED, WITHOUT EXPLAINING HOW, THAT THE TRANSKEI AUTHORITIES HAVE STOPPED MOVEMENT OF BASOTHO IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. (COMMENT: THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED BY ALL OTHER OBSERVERS. CRS REPORTS ITS FOOD SHIPMENTS ARE STILL COMING IN BUT IT BELIEVES THAT MOST OF THE TRUCK DRIVERS ARE NON-BASOTHO. END COMMENT).

3. IN FACE OF THIS SITUATION, GOL INTENDS TO OPEN BUS SERVICE BETWEEN WESTERN LOWLAND SIDE OF LESOTHO AND QACHA'S NEK ON SOUTH-EASTERN BORDER. SINCE LESOTHO NATIONAL BUS COMPANY HAS NO AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT, GOL WILL HIRE TWO BUSES TO BEGIN AND POSSIBLY INCREASE THIS BY PURCHASING ENOUGH EQUIPMENT TO PROVIDE A DAILY TRIP IN EACH DIRECTION.
4. IN ANTICIPATION OF AN ECONOMIC SLUMP, SELF-HELP PROJECTS IN THE AREA WOULD BE INCREASED. THE U.S. CHARGE WAS URGED TO ACCELERATE THE ROAD PROJECT TO CONNECT THE LOWLANDS WITH QACHA'S NEK. STORAGE AND WAREHOUSING WOULD BE NEEDED. GOVERNMENT HAS AUTHORIZED IMMEDIATE
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CONSTRUCTION OF A WHOLESALE SUPPLY FACILITY TO REPLACE THE SOUTH AFRICAN FACILITIES (IN THE TOWN OF MATATIELE) ON WHICH SOUTHEASTERN LESOTHO HAS DEPENDED HERETOFORE. THE MINISTER EMPHASIZED THAT LESOTHO'S NEEDS EXCEED HER MEAGER RESOURCES AND WOULD REQUIRE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

5. KOTSOKOANE SAID LESOTHO HAD PLACED THE BLAME FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION SQUARELY AT THE DOOR OF SOUTH AFRICA. THE ACTIONS OF THE TRANSKEI, HE SAID, ARE IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF LESOTHO-SOUTH AFRICAN AGREEMENTS OF LONG STANDING WHICH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW, MUST BE ACCEPTED BY A NEW STATE CREATED OUT OF THE OLD, EVEN AS LESOTHO HAD ACCEPTED AT INDEPENDENCE ALL THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE FORMER COLONIAL POWER. A PROTEST HAD BEEN SENT TO PRETORIA.

6. MINISTER KOTSOKOANE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS SENDING A MISSION TO QACHA'S NEK LAST WEEKEND. THE MISSION WAS COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVEY OF SIX OR SEVEN MINISTRIES - FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AGRICULTURE, INTERNAL AFFAIRS, WORKS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICE (AND POSSIBLY TELECOMMUNICATIONS). FOREIGN MISSIONS WERE INVITED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES. THE MISSION WOULD HAVE THE TASK OF ASSESSING THE BORDER SITUATION, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE RELIEF NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA. KOTSOKOANE ANTICIPATED THAT FOOD,

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

TRANSPORT, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, AIRLIFT AND FUNDS WOULD BE REQUIRED AND HE ASKED THAT GOVERNMENTS REPRESENTED IN LESOTHO HELP COLLECTIVELY OR INDIVIDUALLY.

7. THE SITUATION AT THE BORDER WAS CORROBORATED BY UNDP RES REP MCADAMS ON THE BASIS OF REPORTS FROM UN VOLUNTEERS IN THE AREA.

8. KOTSOKOANE READ EXCERPTS FROM A REPORT FROM THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRAZOR OF QACHA'S NEK SAYING THAT THE SITUATION IN THE AREA WAS GROWING SERIOUS, THAT NO BASOTHO WERE MOVING THROUGH THE BORDER AND THAT THE SUPPLY SITUATION WAS WORSENING RAPIDLY, ESPECIALLY IN THE OUTLYING AREAS.

9. COMMENT: EMBASSY HOPES TO HAVE REPORT OF GOL MISSION THIS WEEK.
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PAGE 04 MASERU 00559 011747Z

ALSO ACTING UK HIGH COMMISSIONER AND UNDEP RES REP WILL VISIT QACHA'S NEK ON FEBRUARY 28 AND WILL BRIEF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS HERE ON THEIR RETURN. WE BELIEVE USG SHOULD SUPPORT URGENT GOL REQUEST TO UNSYG FOR AN EXPERT MISSION TO ASSESS SITUATION AND ADVISE GOL ON ITS PREROGATIVES. ACTUAL DURATION AND INTENSITY OF THE CRISIS CANNOT BE FORESEEN AT THIS JUNCTURE. SHOULD THE TRANSKEI STICK BY ITS NEW VISA REQUIREMENTS, THE CRISIS WILL GROW IN SEVERITY AS SUPPLIES DWINDLE. IN THE MEANTIME, LESOTHO IS FACED WITH THE PROB-ABILITY OF HAVING TO SHIFT THE ENTIRE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT NETWORK TO THE WEST ALONG THE TWISTING, RUGGED MOUNTAIN ROAD FROM QACHA'S NEK TO QUTHING IN THE LOWLANDS. THIS IS THE ROAD THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED IN PRINCIPLE TO REBUILD.
NORLAND

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Draft Date: 01 mar 1978
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TRANSKEI BORDER PROBLEMS
TAGS: PBOR, PEPR, SF, LT
To: STATE
Type: TE
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20 Mar 2014
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